A Week of Communions

JOSEPH RICKABY S. J.

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A WEEK OF COMMUNIONS

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A WEEK OF COMMUNIONS

An Aid to Frequent Communicants

BY

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MADE IN GREAT BRITAIN

A WEEK OF COMMUNIONS

I

COMMUNION OF PERSEVERANCE IN GRACE

You are, or are not, a Daily Communicant. No? Well, of course, you live two miles from church, weather is generally bad, you must get early to breakfast and early to work, you are lazy in the morning, and not yourself till you have had your breakfast; you have an infinity of excuses, and, you know, no one is bound to communicate more than once a year. I am glad to hear you are a K.B.S. and manage to get to Communion on Sundays. Still, you should know the doctrine of Daily Communion, taught by Pius X in the Decree of December 20th, 1905. The Decree says: "Frequent and Daily Communion should be open to all the faithful, so that no one who is

in the state of grace, and approaches the holy table with a right and pious intention, can lawfully be hindered therefrom. Confessors are to be careful not to dissuade anyone from frequent and daily Communion, provided he be in the state of grace and approach with a right intention. A right intention consists in this: that he who approaches the holy table should do so, not out of routine, or vain-glory, or human respect, but for the purpose of pleasing God, and seeking this remedy for his weaknesses and defects."

Just one caution. If I have fallen into what *I am quite sure* is a mortal sin, will it do to make an act of contrition, so get restored to the state of grace, and thereupon go to Communion? No, it will not do. Here the Decree of the Council of Trent (sess. 13, cap 7) comes in: "He who wishes to communicate should call to mind the Apostle's precept, *Let a man prove himself* (I Cor. xi, 28). Now the Church's custom declares that the necessary proving of oneself consists in this, that no one with mortal sin on his conscience, however contrite he may think himself, ought to approach the Holy

Eucharist without previous sacramental confession."

So much for the law: now for counsels. The Decree counsels "serious preparation, followed by a suitable thanksgiving, according to each one's strength, circumstances, and duties." You are advised not to be talking with a friend up to the last moment, and then walk straight up to the altar-rail. You are advised not to rush out of the church as soon as the Last Gospel is finished, though you have been to Communion only five minutes before. Remember that the Holy Eucharist, and indeed every Sacrament, works in two ways: *ex opere operato*, *i.e.*, by the work done by the Sacrament itself, putting grace into your soul, and *ex opere operantis*, *i.e.*, by your own work, meriting more grace by your piety and prayer. A communicant should not be like a baby at baptism, or a dying man, anointed when he is unconscious. Baptism, or Extreme Unction, there work *ex opere operato* only, the recipient being incapable of doing anything for himself. But where the recipient can do something for himself, he loses a great deal of grace in the

reception of the Sacrament by neglecting then to pray. St. Teresa says that the time of thanksgiving after Communion is the best time in our lives for dealing familiarly with our Lord, and getting what we want out of Him. Some have remarked that frequent communicants nowadays are getting strangely neglectful of thanksgiving. *Were not ten* at My table: *and where are the nine? There is none found to stay and give glory to God, but this stranger* (Luke xvii, 17–18). This advice is not to be pressed too hard. "Strength, circumstances, and duties," to quote the words of the Decree, may permit no more than a brief thanksgiving. But in this and everything else you should grudge the loss of valuable moments and grand opportunities.

May we go to Communion with venial sins, even when we are not sorry for them? Do you want a straight answer, yes or no? The answer then to both questions is *yes*. And it is supplied by the Decree, where it says: "Although it is most expedient that those who communicate daily should be free from venial sins, nevertheless it is sufficient that they be

free from mortal sin." Only mortal sin on the conscience makes a bad Communion. But the Decree does not leave the matter there. It points out that there are venial sins which are "fully deliberate," and which we have an "affection" for: other venial sins there are, and swarms of them too, which are things done suddenly, are only half-voluntary, and are matter of regret immediately they are done. The former are evidently the worse and the more avoidable. And the Decree expects, even makes sure, that daily communicants, who come with the "right intention" prescribed, "not out of routine, but for the purpose of pleasing God," will by degrees fall less and less into any sin, even venial. Under the conditions aforesaid, "it is impossible but that daily communicants should gradually emancipate themselves even from venial sins, and from all affection thereto."

An example. There is a school-boy who hates work, and idles systematically as much as ever he dares. Without saying that such boys are "as plentiful as blackberries," we must avow that they grow on many a bush. Now

such systematic idleness is a venial sin: it is neglecting the duties of your state of life. And this dear old sin of sloth is one that the boy in question has quite an affection for. He goes to Communion without any intention or purpose whatsoever of working harder. And the Communion is a good one. And day by day it is the same. But, we presume, he daily renews his "right intention": he wants to get closer to our Lord and do better. In time many things dawn upon him, besides the avoidance of downright mortal sin, things that his conscience scarce boggled at before, or took to be inevitable. Temper, school duties, obedience, kindness, humility to inferiors, open many avenues. That boy in a few weeks will probably be found working harder.

The reason why people so readily fall into all sorts of sins, mortal and venial, is that for many days, weeks, months, they let themselves drift, and make no effort at all after goodness. Now the daily communicant, who follows the Pope's counsels, will certainly not let himself drift. Every morning he pulls himself up, and grace will do the rest. This fact meets an

objection that we sometimes hear against frequent Communion, that it is expecting the Sacraments to work like magic. There is no magic about the Sacraments: no two things could be more unlike than Sacraments and Magic. The magician expects a sensible, visible effect to follow from sensible acts, which in the nature of things are quite inadequate to produce such an effect: *e.g.*, to change a rod into a snake by three times waving it over your head. The effect of Sacraments is never sensible and visible, but spiritual and unseen, except in so far as they ultimately affect behaviour, which is of course visible. No one expects Sacraments to improve anybody as it were automatically, without any concurrence of his own, as though their effect were entirely *ex opere operato*, and *ex opere operantis* did not enter in at all. No one expects anybody to be evidently better for his daily Communions, if he makes them, though not actually in mortal sin, yet without any love for Him whom he receives, without any wish to serve Him better, acting merely out of routine, wishing to do as others do and not be beaten: or perhaps to

curry favour with the authorities. Heaven avert communicants of this stamp from our altar-rails!

But the Decree has a deeper purpose than the eradication of venial sin. It declares "the desire of Jesus Christ and the Church that the faithful should daily approach this sacred banquet chiefly to this end, that they may thence derive strength to resist their sensual passions, and avoid these graver sins to which human frailty is liable." This is plain speaking. Daily Communion is not the reward of high sanctity: it is the safeguard of those who without it might readily lapse again and again into grievous sin. There is something nobler than the Sacraments, as the end is nobler than the means. Sanctifying grace is the end to which all seven Sacraments are means. The end of Communion is to increase and preserve in us sanctifying grace. Daily Communion is principally intended to get us to live day by day in the state of grace. Monthly Communion is well, but are there not monthly communicants, aye, and many of them too, whose way it has been to spend part

of the month in the state of grace, and the rest of it in mortal sin, waiting for their next Confession and Communion day? God knows for many souls monthly Communion is not enough to ensure their continually keeping in the state of grace. Then try daily Communion, said Pius X. It has been tried, and for sixteen years it has succeeded wonderfully: "Sacraments for men."

It is better to live a whole month in the grace of God, without any Communion (and the thing can be done), than to go to Communion daily, and still commit three mortal sins a week: which is not wholly impossible. But, speaking generally, who is more likely to pass the month without mortal sin, the daily communicant, or he who makes no Communion at all? There can be no doubt about the answer. The best good I want to draw from my Communions, daily, weekly, monthly, whatever they be, but especially if they be daily, is to banish mortal sin from my soul, and keep me "in holiness and justice," that is, in the state of grace, "before God, all the days of my life." It was a favourite saying of that experienced

and holy priest, Father Peter Gallwey, that anyone who, after he is grown up, lives two years without mortal sin, ought to make sure of his eternal salvation. This, then, I pray in this present Communion: "Lord, preserve me from mortal sin till I have the happiness of receiving Thee again."

In some ages and states of life there is every facility for daily Communion; in others, all sorts of difficulty up to downright impossibility. Is it not wise, while the opportunity lasts, and the "seven years of plenty" still run, to lay up a provision of Communions against the "lean years" (Gen. xli, 25–36)? Strong against sin in youth, strong also in age.

PRAYER

Stay with me, O Lord, for darkness is coming on. In the dark hour of temptation stay with me. Stay with me till my next Communion, that in the interval I may not lose Thy grace by falling into mortal sin.

II

COMMUNION OF APOSTLESHIP OF PRAYER

THE Apostleship of Prayer is an institution started in the nineteenth century for the carrying out of a principle laid down by St. Augustine in the fifth, a principle, as he shows, essential to the constitution of the Church. These are his words in his *City of God*, Book X, chapters vi, and xx: "Every work directed to the end of our cleaving in holy society to God is a sacrifice. Hence man himself, hallowed in the name of God and devoted to God, inasmuch as he dies to the world to live to God, is a sacrifice. Our body is a sacrifice, when we chasten it by temperance, *making our members, not instruments of unrighteousness unto sin, but instruments of righteousness unto God* (Rom. vi, 13). If then the body, which the soul uses as an inferior, as a servant or instrument,

is a sacrifice when the good and right use of it is referred to God, how much more does the soul herself become a sacrifice, when she refers herself to God, when she is set afire with His love, when she loses the form of worldly lust, and is re-formed in submission to God, re-formed by the form of unchangeable goodness, and made pleasing to Him by that which she has received of His bounty! Thus it comes about that the whole redeemed City of God, the congregation and society of Saints, is offered as a universal sacrifice to God by the great High Priest, who also offered Himself in sacrifice for us, that we should be made the Body of such a Head. This sacrifice He offered inasmuch as He *bore the form of a servant* (Phil. ii, 7). This form of a servant He offered, in this He was offered, because according to this He is our Mediator, in this He is our Priest, in this our Sacrifice. We ourselves make up this sacrifice in its entirety, when we act upon the exhortation of the Apostle to *present our bodies as a living victim, holy well-pleasing to God, our spiritual service, and are not conformed to this world, but re-formed in newness*

of mind (Rom. xii, 1, 2). This is the sacrifice of Christians, *many, one body in Christ* (Rom. xii, 5). This the Church continually offers (*frequentat*) in the Sacrament of the Altar, known to the faithful, where the Church is shown that she herself is offered in that which she offers . . . By this sacrifice our *Mediator, the Man Christ Jesus* (I Tim. ii, 5) is our Priest, Himself the offerer, Himself also the oblation. He would have the Daily Sacrifice of the Church for a sacramental sign of this truth. As being the Body of which He is the Head, the Church learns to offer herself through Him."

This is in substance exactly what Leo XIII lays down for the Apostleship of Prayer. Pope Leo bids us daily and as continually as possible to offer to God our whole selves, soul and body, with all that we do and all that we suffer, in union with the Sacred Heart of Christ, offering Himself continually on our Altars, in that same offering which He made once for all, one and perpetual, on the Cross. It is the Sacrifice, as St. Augustine says, of Christ and His Church. By joining in it, as long as we are

in the state of grace, all our lawful actions the live-long day are sanctified as part of that great Sacrifice, and so are meritorious of heaven, and effectual for the good of the Church. Our whole life becomes Apostolic, hence the name, "Apostleship of Prayer." If every Catholic fell in with this Apostleship, aiming at making himself and all his doings fit to be united with Christ and according to His Sacred Heart, we should witness wonderful progress, progress within by the sanctification of the Church's own members, and progress without by the work of conversions. We cannot go thinking always of God and pious things. That is neither possible nor necessary. But by virtue of this Morning Offering, seasonably renewed from time to time, our thoughts, words, and actions, though not in themselves of a religious character, are yet caught up and supernaturalized, so long as they be in accordance with God's law and free from sin. We are doing good without thinking of it, which is often the best way of doing good.

Pious Christians love Holy Communion. They do not always sufficiently love Holy Mass.

They are apt to come to regard Mass merely as the rite which renders Holy Communion possible, inasmuch as the Real Presence cannot be brought about except by the consecration at Mass. But Mass is much more than a means to Holy Communion. Mass and Communion are one rite. When we communicate, we partake of the Victim which is offered at Mass. That signifies to God, and should signify to us, that we are co-victims with Christ, co-victims and co-offerers with our Redeemer. "There is no worthier oblation, no greater satisfaction for the washing away of sins, than to offer oneself to God purely and entirely with the oblation of the Body of Christ in Mass and Communion" (*Imitation of Christ,* IV, *c.* vii, and read the two chapters that follow). Holy Communion may be given out of Mass, but it is much better given in Mass, because it is really part of Mass. The mystery of the Eucharist is essentially a uniting of oneself with Christ, and an offering of oneself to God in Christ, really and substantially present. It is Calvary perpetuated, and as such is the

supreme glory of God, the one homage worthy of God that earth can offer.

Christ offers, and we offer, we Catholic baptized Christians, not catechumens, heretics, or pagans. Christ is offered, and we Catholic Christians are offered. That is, we offer ourselves. No other can do the offering of myself instead of me. I alone have ultimate dominion over myself.

All to God in Christ, that is Holy Communion, that is Mass, and that is the Apostleship of Prayer.

PRAYER

Lord, by Thy grace I am a Catholic, a member of Thy one true Church, a member of Thy Mystical Body in which Thou art perpetuated on earth, and which with Thee is continually offered up to the glory of Thy Father, in union wherewith I offer myself, all that I am, all that I suffer, and all that I do.

III

COMMUNION OF INCORPORATION IN CHRIST

"He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood abideth in me and I in him" (John vi, 54). To use a phrase which St. Paul uses some fifty times, he is *in Christ;* or to revert to a phrase current at Stonyhurst sixty years ago (now, I suppose, obsolete), he is *in with Christ.*[1] St. Paul explains, showing how Christ and His Church make up one complete Living Being, of which Christ is the Head and the Faithful the members. And as a head would be incomplete that had no body, so is Christ, as our Head and Redeemer, incomplete without the Church of His redeemed, which is therefore called His *complement* (*pleroma,* the Greek word for a ship's complement, without which

[1]In 1860 two boys were said to be *in with* one another when they shared their Christmas boxes together.

the ship is *incomplete*). "As the body is one and hath many members, and all the members of the body, many as they are, are one body, so also is Christ. Ye are the body of Christ, and members each in his part. We being many are one body in Christ. He (God) hath made Him (Christ) supreme head of the Church, which is His body, the fulness, or complement, of Him who is fully made up and completed by His union with all of us. One Body and one Spirit. To the building up of the body of Christ, unto a full-grown man, to the measure of the full stature of Christ, of whom all the body is welded together and grows through every supplying limb unto the building up of itself. For we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones." (I Cor. xii, 12, 27; Rom. xii, 5; Eph. i, 10, 22, 23; iv, 4, 12, 13, 15, 16; v, 30.)[1]

The same truth St. Paul enforces, and St. Peter also, by speaking of Christ our Saviour, as Man, making along with us one glorious living temple: "built upon the foundation

[1]These and the following passages are here translated directly from the Greek text.

of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone, in whom all the building fitted together groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord, in whom be ye also built up into a spiritual dwelling-place of God, to whom approaching as to a living stone, a chosen stone, an honoured corner-stone, be ye, too, as living stones built up, a spiritual house" (Eph. ii, 20–22 : I Pet. ii, 4–6).

Lastly, our Lord Himself strikingly declares His close union with His Church, calling Himself the Vine whereof we are the branches : "I am the vine, ye the branches. He that abideth in me and I in him, he beareth much fruit" (John xv, 1, 4, 5). The vinestock is not the branches, the Faithful are not Christ, but vinestock and branches, Christ and His Faithful, are one complete organism : they make together Christ in His fulness, a fulness ever growing as the ages of Church history roll on, a fulness that shall have achieved its final plenitude in the day of the General Resurrection : "And I will raise him up at the last day" (John vi, 54).

Hereby we understand that the Human Nature of Christ, that is, His Body and Soul,

though given to us in Holy Communion, does not stay and dwell in us, but departs when the Sacred Species are consumed. We are *in Christ* and Christ *in us* in this sense: that so long as we are Catholic Christians in the state of grace we are *continuous with Christ*, and so one with Him, as the foot is one with the head, the branch with the vinestock, the nave and western towers of York Minster with the choir. And as a good building is built in one style (you would not put a Corinthian portico on to York), so we baptized communicants should be in one *style* with Christ; and Christ's style is supernatural holiness, or sanctifying grace, and whatever behaviour goes well with sanctifying grace.

Not all human behaviour does that. There is behaviour so disgraceful and incongruous that it at once expels sanctifying grace: that behaviour is mortal sin. There is also behaviour not quite so bad as that, still incongruous: that is wilful, deliberate, cold-blooded, systematic venial sin, *e.g.*, small resentments kept up, idleness and neglect of duties of one's state, insubordination, foolish

talk, waste, tale-bearing, insincerity, temper let run riot. A man in the state of grace, who flies into a violent passion, "saddens," as St. Paul says, "the Holy Spirit of God in whom he is signed" (Eph. iv, 30). For we must remember that though Christ as Man does not literally dwell in every Christian in grace, Christ's Holy Spirit, the Holy Ghost, does so reside. He, too, is given us in Holy Communion, and given us to stay, and comes to reside in us more and more fully and effectually for every good Communion we make. "Know ye not that your members are the temple of the Holy Ghost, who is in you, whom ye have of God, and are not your own?" (I Cor. vi, 19).

We are here led back to the admonition in Pius X's Decree: "It is impossible but that daily communicants should gradually emancipate themselves even from venial sins" (n. 3). "I will purge, leave sack, and live as a nobleman should do": so purposed poor Falstaff (I Henry IV, act 5, sc. 1). And I too will live as a Christian should who is in vital union with Christ, and in whom Christ's Spirit dwells.

Christ coming so near to us asks for much. He gives much, and asks for much: His giving and His asking are both for our good. He asks the putting away of all wilful sin, avoidance of ill company that can be avoided, carefulness in our reading, watchfulness over our expenditure of time and money, works of charity, and of self-sacrifice for charity's sake, and, as years roll on, not a little suffering.

We are in with Christ, we share Christmas boxes with Him, and in Christ's Christmas box, when you open it, you may expect to find, there down at the bottom, tucked away in the midst of sweets and comforts and consolations, the Cross. "Houses, brothers, sisters and lands, with persecutions" (Mark x, 30).

PRAYER

Lord, let me be *in with* Thee, going shares with Thee, such as Thou art, in Thy style, so far as is possible for me in my poor measure on earth, humble and obedient, modest and chaste and industrious, like a good vinebranch bearing fruit in Thee.

IV

COMMUNION OF REPARATION

Reparation is the keynote of the devotion to the Sacred Heart, as it was first inculcated by our Lord upon St. Margaret Mary. Reparation is *making up* for injury or insult done. He wished the Saint herself to make up, and to urge others to make up, for the slights offered to His Sacred Heart in the Blessed Sacrament, particularly by souls who were specially consecrated to Him, because we must know that there were at that time in France, and in other countries, many religious and many priests who took up their holy state, not in view of its holiness, but for the temporal advantages and emoluments which it then brought with it. Happily there are fewer such now.

But the great wicked world still stands ever against the Lord and against His Christ. If the Church is growing holier, as we may well

think she is, the world is growing more lawless, more Godless, more reckless of sin, blinder than ever to the judgments of God, denying, not merely the Real Presence, but the Incarnation itself, and knowing no God and Creator, but some figment of Pantheism. As a whole, the world in unconvertible; it is *seated in wickedness*, or *in the power of the Evil One* (I John v, 19), and will remain so to the end. What are we to do then? Convert individuals, rescue them from the world and the power of Satan, pluck off some of the world's members, cut the claws of the monster whom we are unable to slay. As St. Peter says: *Save yourselves from this perverse generation* (Acts ii, 40), and help to save others. The saved are the *few chosen* (Matt. xxii, 14), who walk in the *narrow way*, while the many walk in the *broad way which leadeth to destruction* (Matt. vii, 13, 14). Our Lord's friends are few, but the desire of His Heart is ever to widen the circle of them (cf. Luke xii, 49). His ordinary way of doing this is to make more friends through the friends whom He already has. He will work to this effect, not through priests and

religious only, not through the learned and influential only, not even through very saintly personages only : He will do His work through the humblest instrument, the youngest, poorest, least educated of His servants, who only has a good will to help in his Lord's work.

Reparation is due from us in the first place for our own sins. There may be much to make up that way, more than we are willing to think. We flatter ourselves that we are spiritually *rich and want nothing*, whereas likely enough before God we are *miserable and blind and naked* (Apoc. iii, 17). A double reparation then is due from us, for ourselves and for others. Jesus Christ is a Man with few friends and vast desires. To compass the things that He desires, He needs, we may say, all that He has got. Thus I may truly say that He needs me, He has something to be done which He earnestly desires to have done by me, and I can do for Him. What that something is I can but vaguely know. If I succeed in doing it, my success will probably never be known to me in this world. All I have to do is to put myself

unreservedly in His hands, with an earnest desire to be of service to Him, and He will use me for what purposes He chooses, often without acquainting me with them. No fear of my being useless so long as my will is good and my desire to do service in Christ's cause sincere. And there is so much to be done, such fearful wickedness to struggle against, such hopes at the same time, here especially in England, of undoing the work of the Reformation and Catholicizing our land once more. Our Lord wants instruments. *Here I am, send me* (Isai. vi, 8). *I am no prophet, only a tiller of the ground* (Zach. xiii, 5). But my Jesus will accept my poor goodwill, and make something out of his humblest instrument. Whatever good comes, it will be His doing, not mine: that is precisely my hope of much good to come through me. Here is the Communion of Reparation in a practical form.

PRAYER

Lord, Thou lovest. Thou art not loved. Oh, would that Thou wert loved. The world knoweth Thee not and loveth Thee not. The world is a stranger to Thee. But in the Church Thou findest a home, where Thou art known and loved. In the faith of the Church I know Thee, in the charity of the Church love Thee. Through the Church Thou wouldst be the light of the world, through the Church Thou wouldst spread the fire of love which Thou camest on earth to kindle. In the Church let me do my part as an instrument to make Thee better known and loved.

V

COMMUNION OF ADORATION

To adore God is to come into His presence, bow down before Him, body and soul, but principally in soul; acknowledge Him for the Sovereign and Supreme Being, from whom as Creator all other being is derived, acknowledge Him therefore as Lord and Master of all that He has made, and of me, His worshipper, in particular; and so put myself under Him absolutely and be wholly His. Such is adoration, evidently a homage due to God, and to God alone. Adoration of any mere creature would be idolatry. We adore each of the three Persons of the Blessed Trinity, because each of them is one and the same God with the other two.

Now for a difficulty, introduced and solved by St. Augustine, writing on these words of the ninety-eighth psalm: *Adore his footstool,*

because it is holy. St. Augustine writes: "How shall we adore earth, since Scripture says: *The Lord Thy God shalt thou adore* (Deut. vi, 13)? Yet here it says: *Adore His footstool.* And declaring what is His footstool, it says, *Earth is my footstool* (Isai. lxvi, 1). I am in a maze. I am afraid of adoring earth, lest I be condemned by Him who made heaven and earth. On the other hand, I am afraid of not adoring earth, since the psalm tells me: *Adore His footstool.* In my perplexity I turn to Christ, and find a way of adoring earth without impiety, and adoring His footstool without sin. He took earth of earth, because flesh is of earth, and of the flesh of Mary He took flesh. And because in this same flesh He walked, and this same flesh He has given us to eat for our salvation (for no one eats that flesh without first adoring it), a way is found how this the Lord's footstool may be adored, and not only shall we not sin in adoring it, but we should sin if we did not adore."

Yes, we adore the Flesh of Christ, His Body and Blood, Soul, Heart, Wounds, the whole

of His Sacred Humanity; we adore It with the same adoration that we pay to the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, because it is the Body and Blood, Soul, Heart, Wounds, Human Nature, of the Second Person made Man. The Man Jesus Christ is adorable, because He is God. True, His Body is not God, nor His Precious Blood, nor any part of His Sacred Humanity, but it is of Divine dignity, because it is the Humanity of God. St. Cyril of Alexandria says it is "made God," τεθεοποιημένον, which does not mean that it is converted into God—that were impossible, and it were converted into God, it would cease to be a Humanity at all. But it means that the Humanity of Christ is penetrated through and through with the Godhead—as the Fathers say, "like a live coal with fire"—and so is endowed with the moral attributes of Godhead, to wit, with the Majesty and Holiness of God. It is holy with all God's holiness, majestic as He is majestic, adorable as He is adorable. We adore God through the Sacred Humanity, and at the same time we adore that Humanity Itself, as something "divinised

and deified" (to use St. Cyril's expression), by its being united in the unity of one Person with the D vinity of the Son of God.

Now all this is a mystery beyond our comprehension or adequate understanding. We Catholics understand more about the Incarnation than we can put into words; but the full import of the mystery lies for ever beyond the grasp of mortal man. So then, when you go to Communion, you adore the Sacred Host as being under that appearance of bread the Body and Blood of God made Man. When you hear Mass, you adore Jesus on the Altar, and through Him and with Him you adore His Father and the Holy Ghost, all three Persons of the Blessed Trinity.

Adoration has a practical side. It enforces the commandment, *Thou shalt not have strange gods before me* (Exod. xx, 3). We read how, *when Solomon was old, women inclined his heart to other gods, and his heart was not wholly given over to the Lord his God* (III Kings xi, 4). Solomon became a downright worshipper of idols, Chamos, Moloch, and others. Henry VIII did not go quite so far as that, yet cer-

tainly women and greed of wealth and power took off his heart from the Lord his God. He built himself a veritable pagoda of idols, persons and things, that he worshipped so passionately as for the enjoyment of them to set aside God and His law. I know you will not do that. But is even your heart quite made over to the Lord your God? Have you not some little statuette, some image of clay, which you cherish to the extent of loving God less on its account? "What," you say, "am I to love nothing else but God?" I do not say that; nor does St. Thomas say it when treating of Charity in the second part of his *Summa*. You do right to love father and mother, wife, children, friends, the things of your household, your amusements, your country. The love of creatures is often a help to the love of God, *e.g.*, the love of a good mother, of a good wife, of that *beauty of God's house* which the Psalmist declared he loved (Ps. xxv). The rule is (I confess it is somewhat of a difficult rule to apply) never to love any creature in such a way that for love of that creature you love God less. Charity, or the love of God,

does not exclude other affections, but it insists in dominating them all. It must be *above all things*, and nothing must stand in its way. Apply this rule at Communion time, and it will not only save you from mortal sin, but also from many venial sins and countless imperfections.

PRAYER

Lord, I adore Thee. I put Thee first in my affections, above all other persons and things that I love, and above my own very self. Keep me from loving anything or anybody in such a wild way as to make that creature a rival to Thee.

VI

COMMUNION OF THANKSGIVING

We all remember as children being taught, when anything was given us, "Now say, thank you." We were being tutored into gratitude. An untutored mind, such as that of the lowest savages, knows no gratitude. I have heard of a language in which there is no word for *thank you;* what the savage says, when you give him anything, is, "This will be useful for me." It is not the untutored man alone, but the proud man also, who knows no gratitude. Gratitude is a confession of our own insufficiency and need of help from without; now the proud man behaves as though he were sufficient for himself, and is reluctant to own his dependence on or indebtedness to anyone. Gratitude is the twin sister of humility. The poor in spirit, the simple and lowly, are grateful.

St. Thomas (*Contra Gentiles*, I, *cc.* 92–4)

examines whether virtues can be posited in God. Clearly, they cannot be in God as they are in us. On the other hand, whatever is good in man must be in God, in some higher and better way. There is a special difficulty about gratitude being in God, from the fact that God, alone of all beings, is self-sufficient. Still He is pleased to take to Himself from creation a measure of external glory, not that He needs it, but because He is worthy of it, as a King personally does not need a royal salute of a hundred and one guns, but His Majesty is worthy of that salute. May not then God be grateful for the external glory that we give Him? He certainly is pleased with it, and will reward it liberally. *Well done, thou good and faithful servant* (Matt. xxv, 21) comes very near to an expression of gratitude. Still more readily, perhaps, may we ascribe gratitude to the Human Nature of our Lord. The Sacred Heart is grateful. So we may gather from Mother Julian of Norwich, Sixth Revelation, chapter xiv, which is all on this subject. There our Lord says to her: "I thank thee for thy travail,

and especially for thy youth." She adds: "And I saw that the age of them that willingly and freely offer their youth unto God is passing well rewarded and wonderfully thanked."

But if God can condescend to gratitude, much more are we, His needy creatures, bound to it. We must learn of Him to be grateful to our inferiors, to servants. Gratitude to the servant, loyalty to the master: that is the twofold ideal of Christian service. It should never be a mere commercial transaction, so much money, so much service, neither more nor less. There should be heart put into it. After all, the richest and greatest of us would be poorly off but for the attentions of his servants from morning to night.

Let us then be grateful and be ready with our thanks to all around us. But the great object of our gratitude is God. Of Him we have all, Him we need supremely. The first point of the last Exercise in St. Ignatius' *Spiritual Exercises* is an outpouring of gratitude to God. The tale of our indebtedness to Him lengthens out with every year of our lives. Old men should be grateful, dying men should

be grateful, we should die giving thanks. Gratitude is the best worship of our Creator. It proclaims His goodness, while humbly professing our own nothingness and insufficiency and absolute dependence on Him. And that is just what God likes. *Confess to the Lord, for He is good* (Ps. cxvii).

But God does not always give us our own way. It is well to thank God when we get our way, as after all, while health lasts, if we think. we shall find that we commonly manage to do within certain limits. But if our gratitude stops there, it will be a very imperfect thank-offering. There is much to displease us, there are many failures, as well in our own private purposes as in public affairs, affairs such as the Russian Famine of 1921–2, over which we have no control, but in which we take a legitimate and proper interest. We must boldly take up St. John Chrysostom's "Blessed be God for all things." They were the Saint's dying words, and the theme of his preaching all his life long. On that "Blessed be God for all things" he founded his teaching and his sanctity. Even for the Russian famine, even

for the overthrow of religious houses in England under Henry VIII, we must still say "Blessed be God."

God is holy in all His works, *sanctus in omnibus operibus suis* (Ps. cxliv). There are many evil works, not of God, of which our Lord says, *An enemy hath done this* (Matt. xiii, 28), the sins and the follies of men. We cannot praise God for sins and follies, we detest and deplore them: but inasmuch as they happen not but by God's permission (and God's permission is not devoid of purpose, since out of evil, *e.g.*, the evil of the Jews in crucifying Messiah, God can and will bring good), for that permission and purpose and wise application of evil materials, we still praise God. *His praise shall ever be in my mouth* (Ps. xxxiii). Ever and for ever in Heaven, where I shall better understand His ways; ever while I live on earth, where I do not understand them, but take on faith His abiding wisdom and power and goodness—ever and for ever I will thank God.

In particular, I must thank God for the failures in my own life. Woe be to the man who meets with nothing but success! Such a

man, if such there were, would surely never succeed in the one thing where success is finally vital and necessary, the salvation of his own soul.

The word *Eucharist* means "a giving of thanks." May I be an inveterate giver of thanks to my God. May I ever be satisfied with Him, and He will be satisfied with me.

Here are some French verses which I may apply to the praise of God when I fail.

Le coq Français est le coq de gloire ;
Quand il est vainqueur, il chante encore ;
Plus fort encore quand il est bien battu.
The French cock's crow for victory rings :
But louder and louder when beaten he sings.

Wait till you are *bien battu*, for purposes of this life, that is the hour for you to praise God.

Praise to the Holiest in His height,
And in the depth be praise,
In all His words most wonderful,
Most sure in all His ways.

NEWMAN, *Dream of Gerontius.*

PRAYER

Lord, a Doctor of Thy Church has said: "God is satisfied with the man who is satisfied with God" (*Ill placet Deo, cui placet Deus*, S. Augustine on Psalm xxxii). These are good terms, my God, and I take them willingly. I will now and henceforth for ever fall in with Thy providence over me and accept it cheerfully. Blessed be Thou for all things.

VII

COMMUNION OF THE HOLY SOULS

As in every Mass there is a Memento for the dead, so we should pray for the dead in every Communion. But as Mass is sometimes said in black vestments with special prayers for the dead, so it is well at times to offer Holy Communion with a special intention for the faithful departed.

All that we know *with the certainty of faith* about Purgatory is contained in the decrees of the Councils of Florence and Trent, and in the Profession of Faith of Pius IV, "That there is a Purgatory, and that the souls there detained are aided by the prayers of the faithful, by Mass most of all." We may take it as implied in this decree that the souls in Purgatory are consumed with a continual desire of reaching Heaven, and to that end they cry continually for our prayers.

We should not only pray for the souls in Purgatory, we should also imitate them. Willy nilly, we get a good deal of purgatory during our sojourn on earth in the shape of the sufferings that God is pleased to send us, if we take them with resignation. Suffering moves us to desire Heaven, and therein we imitate the holy souls. To desire Heaven (if we know what Heaven means) is to desire God. If we desire God as the souls in Purgatory desire Him, because He is *my* God and *my* Sovereign Good (which is the virtue of Hope), we can scarce stop short of loving God above all simply and solely because He is God and Sovereign Goodness Itself (which is Charity). Try this on for yourself, dear Christian. When you can say, "What I want above everything is God," I will say to you, "Then you must love God above everything."

Let us go back to the important truth. *Heaven is God*, as on the contrary, *Hell is the loss of God*. Find God finally, and all creation is yours; it is all at your service, ministering to your delight in God. All good things created have come in to you along with their

Creator. Lose God, as the lost lose Him, and all creation is your everlasting enemy, out to torment you, material creation particularly. See the fifth point of St. Ignatius' Second Meditation on Sin in the *Exercises*. Whoever then has arrived at a predominant and continual desire of heaven, making that the mainspring of all his actions, will find himself no less perfect in charity than in hope.

Innocent XII in 1699 condemned this proposition and others to the like effect: "There is such a thing as an habitual love of God, in which the desire of reward has no longer any part." The authors of this proposition maintained that while the ordinary Christian did well to keep himself up by desire of heaven, the perfect Christian should habitually and invariably cast that desire aside altogether, and simply love God for God's own sake, without any wish or thought of ever finding himself and his own happiness in God. But the Pope would not have it so. He would not have the virtue of Hope cut away to make more room for Charity. It were no help to Charity to destroy Hope. To succeed

in doing so would be the ruin of both virtues. They are two distinct virtues, to be sure; but, as has been observed, Hope leads up to Charity, and comes so close to it, that it is hard to say where the one stops and the other begins. When I earnestly desire for myself God above all things, surely I must love above all things what I desire above all things. Yes, but for myself? Not for myself solely and exclusively. Selfishness is exclusiveness; it is the shutting out of others; it is eating your own cake, and leaving not a bite for your neighbour. That is the last thing that he wishes to do, who is perfect in this virtue of hope and desire. Heaven is a social happiness; it is, if I may say so, *God all round.* I identify myself with the Church. I desire at once my own salvation, and the spread of the Church. The Blessed in Heaven are happy in one another's happiness. Never tell me that this is selfishness, nor am I apt to believe that, in practice, it comes anything short of charity.

Some will recall St. Francis Xavier's prayer: "O God, I love Thee, not that Thou mayest save me, not for hope of any reward, but

because Thou hast loved me; I love Thee solely because Thou art my King and my God." Such is an abridgment of this prayer, and you could not find a more perfect act of Charity. But, it will be said: What is become of hope and desire of heaven? Does not the Saint here positively exclude such a motive? Yes, here he does, just for the nonce, but not *habitually* and for all time. The censure of Innocent XII, above quoted, turns on the phrase "habitual love of God." We have here the passionate cry of a lover, not the *thesis* at a divine, albeit the cry is consistent enough with sound divinity. A lover for the moment narrows his vision, but he is not blind to considerations that he does not here and now regard. What the Church has condemned, is any attempt to make this momentary Xaverian attitude the habitual attitude of a perfect soul, so that such a soul should abstain from the exercise of the theological virtue of Hope altogether. Xavier's spiritual Father, St. Ignatius, must have taught him, what he has left written for the instruction also of his other sons, that in our

love of God for His own sake we should be helped also by the hope of reward. And we need it. The best of us need it. We are not always accessible to the highest motives. We may doubt whether Francis Xavier himself could at all times have felt in himself a sensible response to his own *O Deus, ego amo te.* Must he not have had his hours of depression and exhaustion, those hours when the worn-out body overbears the mind? "Son," says the author of the *Imitation* (III, 51), "thou canst not always dwell in the most fervent desire of virtues, nor set up Thy rest in the highest degree of contemplation." We must betake ourselves to humbler acts, when we fall short of the highest. We should never despise a lower, but innocent motive, when it leads us to good. All educators know that a lower motive is often more efficacious than a higher; such is human infirmity. Step up to the higher, but let the lower be your ladder. This was one of the crazes of those unpractical people, the Jansenists, that they banned fear and hope as motives to virtue. "It is charity alone," said Quesnel, "that speaks with God,

charity alone does God listen to, God crowns nothing but charity ; he who runs on any other impulse, or acts on any other motive, runs in vain." So the Abbé Quesnel ; but not so Pope Clement XI, who in his Bull *Unigenitus* condemned this with a hundred other propositions of the same author.

Make then this Communion in aid of the Holy Souls, to gratify their intense desire of Heaven, and while you aid them, imitate them. Make the desire of Heaven a ruling and continually working motive of your life ; and be sure that in that way you will come to love God, as you hope in Him,—supremely.

PRAYER

Lord, many of my hopes in life have been disappointed, let this one be realised. As I have believed and hoped in Thee, so in the end let me find Thee. Of all things else there is nothing that can replace Thee, and Thou wilt make up for the loss of all things else.

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